

Mostly though you spat out words
except at types like Priscilla Lane.
Robert Blake swears you saved the fragments of his
childhood sanity
fathering him while he played your younger self in
Humoresque.

Like most tragic figures, you left heavy prints.
Nick Adams patterned himself after you even in death.
But Lilli Palmer summed you up most complexly
when she cooed at the confused, scar-tissued
welterweight:

"Tiger, tiger, burning bright,
in the forest of the night."

"What's that mean?" you asked.
Stroking your tired but still tight bicep,
she murmured: "Well built."

You had to be sad and lonely,
but we loved you, if not only,
we loved you, body and soul.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

The western world knows that Johnny can't read
nor can he spell -- TV or not TV.
Likewise the bald spot on Punctuation's head
was last seen going under for the third time
in the La Brea tarpits.

Which leads me to my Ponderoso Question:
do I want commas and colons to return
out of the black lagoon?

A sign outside a bar in Lakewood
makes me wonder. It reads:

Johnny's
Dancing
Cocktails

one solitary dash would have spelled
failure for the entire composition.

-- Charles Stetler

Long Beach CA